

# **Three HMA Water/Bait Gather**

## **Appendix I**

### **Standard Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Gathers**

The following procedures for gathering and handling wild horses would apply whether a contractor or BLM personnel conduct a gather.

Prior to any gathering operation, the BLM will provide for a pre-capture evaluation of existing conditions in the gather area(s). The evaluation will include animal conditions, prevailing temperatures, drought conditions, soil conditions, road conditions, and a topographic map with boundaries, the location of fences, other physical barriers, and acceptable trap locations in relation to animal distribution. The evaluation will determine whether the proposed activities will necessitate the presence of a veterinarian during operations.

Trap sites and temporary holding sites will be located to reduce the likelihood of injury and stress to the animals, and to minimize potential damage to the natural resources of the area. These sites would be located on or near existing roads when feasible.

The primary capture methods used in the performance of gather operations include:

1. Bait Trapping. This capture method involves utilizing bait (feed, supplement, mineral, etc.) to lure wild horses into a temporary trap.
2. Water Trapping. This method involves utilizing water sources to trap wild horses as they come to drink.

The following procedures will be followed to ensure the welfare, safety and humane treatment of wild horses in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR 4700.

### **A. Capture Methods Used in the Performance of Gather Contract Operations**

1. The primary concern is the safe and humane handling of all animals captured. All capture attempts shall incorporate the following:

a. Traps and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high for horses and the bottom rail that shall not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All traps and holding facilities shall be oval or round in design.

b. All loading chute sides shall be a minimum of six feet high and shall be fully covered with plywood or metal without holes larger than two by four inches.

c. All runways shall be a minimum of 30 feet long and a minimum of six feet high for horses and shall be covered with plywood, burlap, plastic snow fence or like material a minimum of one to five feet above ground level for burros and one to six feet for horses. The location of the government-furnished portable fly chute to restrain, age, or provide additional care for the animals shall be placed in the runway in a manner as instructed by or in concurrence with the gather crew.

d. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways shall be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, plastic snow fence, etc.) and shall

be covered a minimum of one to five feet above ground level, two to six feet for horses.

e. All pens and runways used for the movement and handling of animals shall be connected with hinged self-locking or sliding gates.

2. No modification of existing fences will be made without authorization from the agency of jurisdiction.

3. When dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the trap or holding facility, the BLM will wet down the ground with water.

4. Alternate pens within the holding facility to separate mares' small foals, sick and injured animals, strays, or other animals determined to need separate pens from the other animals. Animals shall be sorted according to sex, and condition when in the holding facility to minimize, to the extent possible, injury due to fighting and trampling. Under normal conditions, the government will require that animals be restrained for the purpose of determining an animal's age or sex, or for other necessary procedures. In areas requiring one or more satellite traps, and where a centralized holding facility is utilized, additional holding pens will be provided to segregate animals transported from remote locations so they may be returned to their traditional ranges. Either segregation or temporary marking and later segregation will be at the discretion of the BLM.

5. A continuous supply of fresh, clean water at a minimum rate of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the traps or holding facilities shall be provided good quality hay at the rate of no less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day. An animal held at a temporary holding facility through the night is defined as a horse/burro feed day.

6. If there is a contractor, it is the responsibility of the contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of captured animals until delivery to final destination.

7. Animals shall be transported to their final destination from temporary holding facilities within 24 hours after capture unless prior approval is granted for unusual circumstances. Animals shall not be held in traps and/or temporary holding facilities on days when there is no work being conducted. Animals shall not be allowed to remain standing on trucks while not in transport for a combined period of greater than three hours in any 24 hour period.

## **B. Capture Methods That May Be Used in the Performance of a Gather**

1. Capture attempts may be accomplished by utilizing bait (feed, water, mineral licks) to lure animals into a temporary trap. The following applies:

a. Gates shall be either a swinging panel or a regular metal gate that is intended for use with the portable panel system.

- b. All traps will be manned when actively capturing wild horses.
- c. Traps shall be left open in manner that won't inadvertently trap a wild horse or wildlife when not actively trapping.

### **C. Use of Motorized Equipment**

1. All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of captured animals shall be in compliance with appropriate state and federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals.
2. All motorized equipment, including horse and stock trailers shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to ensure that captured animals are transported without undue risk or injury.
3. Only horse or stock trailers with a covered top shall be allowed for transporting animals from trap site(s) to temporary holding facilities and from temporary holding facilities to final destination(s). Sides or stock racks of all trailers used for transporting animals shall be a minimum height of six feet six inches from the floor.
4. The rear door(s) of horse and stock trailers must be capable of opening the full width of the trailer. Panels facing the inside of all trailers must be free of sharp edges or holes that could cause injury to the animals. The material facing the inside of all trailers must be strong enough so that the animals cannot push their hooves through the side
5. Floors of horse and stock trailers and loading chutes shall be covered and maintained with wood shavings or other non-slip material to prevent the animals from slipping.
6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any trailer may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition. The following minimum square feet per animal shall be allowed in all trailers:
  - 11 square feet per adult horse (1.4 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer);
  - 6 square feet per horse foal (.75 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer);
7. The BLM shall consider the condition and size of the animals, weather conditions, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of captured animals. The BLM shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the captured animals.

### **D. Safety and Communications**

1. The Agencies involved shall have the means to communicate with all personnel engaged in the capture of wild horses utilizing a VHF/FM transceiver or VHF/FM portable two-way radio. If communications are ineffective, the government will take steps necessary to protect the welfare of the animals.

a. All accidents occurring during the performance of any task order shall be immediately reported to the field office.

## **E. Site Clearances**

Personnel working at gather sites will be advised of the illegality of collecting artifacts. Prior to setting up a trap or temporary holding facility, the BLM will conduct all necessary clearances (archaeological, T&E, etc.). The proposed site(s) must be inspected by a government archaeologist. Once archaeological clearance has been obtained, the trap or temporary holding facility may be setup.

Gather sites and temporary holding facilities would not be constructed on wetlands or riparian zones.

## **F. Public Participation**

Opportunities for public viewing (e.g., media, interested public) of gather operations will be made available to the extent possible; however, the primary considerations will be to protect the health, safety and welfare of the animals being gathered and the personnel involved. The public must adhere to guidance from the on-site BLM representative. It is BLM policy that the public will not be allowed to come into direct contact with wild horses or burros being held in BLM facilities. Only authorized BLM personnel or contractors may enter the corrals or directly handle the animals. The general public may not enter the corrals or directly handle the animals at anytime or for any reason during BLM operations.

## **G. Responsibility and Lines of Communication**

The CORT or delegate has direct responsibility to ensure human and animal safety. The Wells or Schell Field Manager's will take an active role to ensure that appropriate lines of communication are established between the field, field office, state office, national program office, and BLM holding facility offices. All employees involved in the gathering operations will keep the best interests of the animals at the forefront at all times.

All publicity and public contact and inquiries will be handled through the Wells or Schell Field Office Public Affairs Officer's. These individuals will be the primary contact and will coordinate with the COR on any inquiries.

The BLM delegate will coordinate with the corrals to ensure animals are being transported from the capture site in a safe and humane manner and are arriving in good condition. The BLM require humane treatment and care of the animals during removal operations. These specifications are designed to minimize the risk of injury and death during and after capture of the animals. The specifications will be vigorously enforced.

#### **H. Additional requirements for personnel conducting gather operations also include:**

1. Electric prods (hotshots) will not be used routinely on horses. They can be used when animal or human safety is in jeopardy or as a last resort. Handlers do not constantly carry prods. Prods are picked up only when necessary and then put away. Electric prods are never applied to sensitive areas such as the eyes.
2. Electric prod use will not be disguised, but used openly and transparently.
3. Handling aids, including electric prods and flags will not be used abusively.
4. Flagging will be used strategically, as excessive flagging desensitizes the animal and becomes useless if used too much.
5. Gates and doors will not be deliberately slammed or shut on horses or burros passing through.
6. Excessive yelling and unnecessary noises will not be utilized in the loading and unloading process.
7. There will be no hitting, kicking, striking or beating a horse.
8. Loading or unloading of transport vehicles is performed during daylight hours, or supplemental light is provided in the area to facilitate visibility.
9. Holes, gaps, or openings will be eliminated in the loading/unloading area to avoid injury.
10. Transport vehicles will be properly aligned with the loading/unloading ramps or docks. No gaps will exist between the unloading/loading docks or ramps and the bottom or floor of the trailer's exit. No gaps exist between the trailer and the side walls of the unloading area, whereby a horse's limbs or head can become stuck or injured.